



# GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

## Attendance Policy

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## 1 Introduction

This policy details what we expect from our academies to ensure we are doing all we can to support every child in our academies to have high attendance and, therefore, improved chances of succeeding at school.

## 2 Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Academies are also advised to be familiar with the useful DfE guidance in [Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities](#).

All work on attendance must also take place in the context of our approaches to safeguarding, behaviour, alternative provision and elective home education.

## 3 Background

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The most effective schools consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at school, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. They also recognise that the foundation to good attendance is a high quality education, delivered in a calm, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve consideration around the academic and pastoral curriculum, behaviour support and procedures for more vulnerable children, such as those with special educational needs or mental health and wellbeing needs. Academies are expected to consider the effective use of resources, including grants such as the Pupil Premium to support children at risk of, or with, attendance concerns.

Attendance is a key priority for the Trust and the Trust Board, through the Standards Committee, monitor attendance across the trust and the application of this policy. We

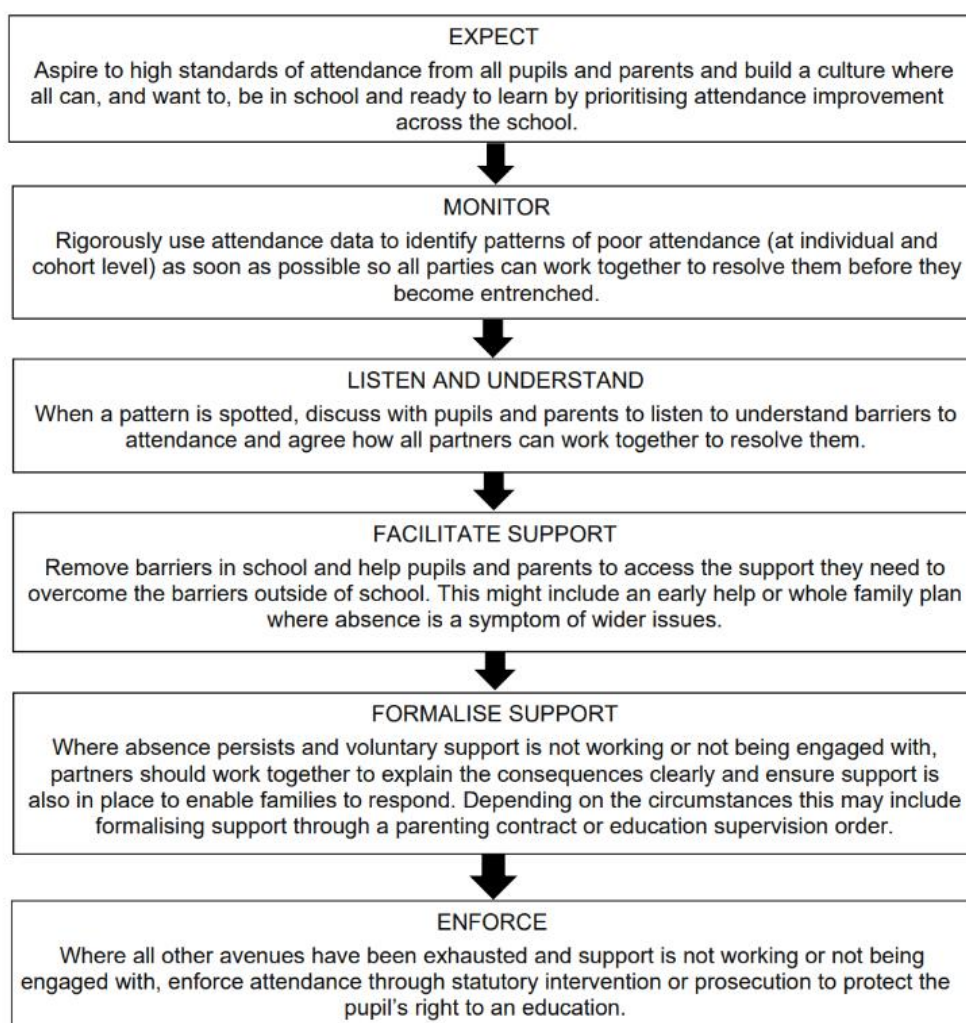
expect all staff involved to have a sound knowledge of good practice in this area and the relevant national and local processes.

#### 4 GAT expectations of academies

In line with DfE expectations, to manage and improve attendance effectively, all academies in GAT are expected to

- develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand
- accurately complete attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence quickly
- regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them
- share information and work collaboratively with other relevant local partners, and particularly local authorities, when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

The DfE use a helpful chart to describe the key stages in any attendance strategy:



## **5 Academy level attendance policies**

In line with DfE guidance, all GAT academies are expected to have their own Attendance Policy that sets out

- the attendance and punctuality expectations of pupils and parents, including start and close of the day, register closing times and the processes for requesting leaves of absence and informing the school of the reason for an unexpected absence
- the name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school
- information and contact details of the school staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day to day basis (such as a tutor, attendance officer etc) and for more detailed support on attendance (such as a head of year, pastoral lead or family liaison officer etc)
- the school's day to day processes for managing attendance, for example first day calling and processes to follow up on unexplained absence
- how the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance
- the school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most
- the school's strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence, including how access to wider support services will be provided to remove the barriers to attendance and when support will be formalised in conjunction with the local authority
- the point at which Fixed Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought if support is not appropriate (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time), not successful, or not engaged with.

The policy must be easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils, and parents, including being published on the school's website.

The policy must be reviewed each year and the Education Director will be responsible for approving it.

## **6 Registers**

In line with DfE requirements, academy leaders must ensure the register is taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion there must be a record of whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstance.

Academy leaders in GAT are expected to ensure that:

- registers are kept up to date
- register closing times are specified and adhered to
- registers are accurately completed using attendance and absence codes as defined by the DfE
- there are effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence quickly.

## **7 Monitoring and improving the attendance of children with a social worker**

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. Historically the national absence rates for children who have ever needed a social worker are particularly of concern.

All GAT academies are expected to work in partnership with Local Authority Virtual School Headteachers and are expected to inform a child's social worker if there are unexplained or unexpected absences from school.

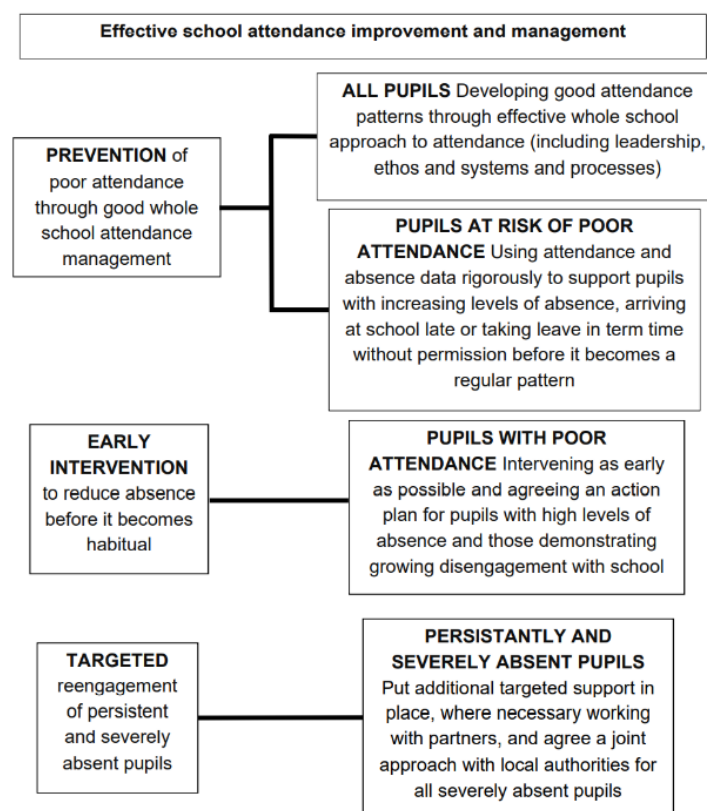
## 8 Persistent and severe absence

The most important element to attendance work are the everyday strategies to develop a culture of high expectations of attendance and punctuality and the work with families to prevent absence becoming a concern.

GAT academies are expected to have bespoke strategies to improve the attendance of pupils at risk of 'Persistent' or 'Severe' absence:

- 'Persistence Absence' is where absence escalates, and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year).
- 'Severe Absence' is when pupil is absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school).

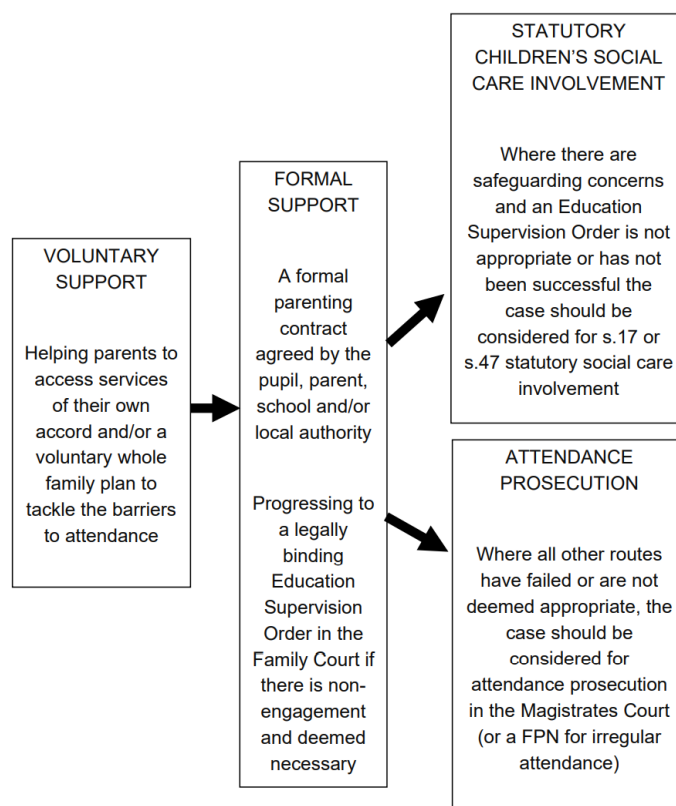
These pupils are likely to be finding it difficult to be in school or face significant barriers to



their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. These categories of absence will be particularly monitored and analysed at an academy and trust level. All GAT academies are expected to provide information to local partners about these cohorts so that pupils who need targeted attendance support receive it as quickly as possible.

## 9 Legal intervention

Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time) the relevant Local Authority will take forward legal intervention to formalise support and/or enforce attendance as below:



Whilst it is the local authority's responsibility to take forward Parenting Contracts, Supervision Orders or Prosecutions, academies must work closely with the local authority's School Attendance Support Team to provide appropriate information. Academy leaders are also expected to be familiar with their local authority arrangements so that they can be clear with families, where appropriate, about the process so that this route is avoided wherever possible.

## 10 Role of the Trust Board

In line with DfE expectations, the Trust Board

- recognises the importance of attendance and promotes it across the trust's ethos and policies
- regularly reviews trust and academy level attendance data to ensure leaders are focusing improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- ensures leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, specifically that
  - all academies have a thorough and effective attendance policy
  - all academies are complying with their policy
  - all academies are keeping registers up to date and completing them accurately as per DfE guidance
  - all academies are working effectively with local partners, particularly in regard to the most vulnerable children and most challenging cases
  - all academies ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance
  - effective practice on attendance management and improvement is shared across academies in the Trust.